

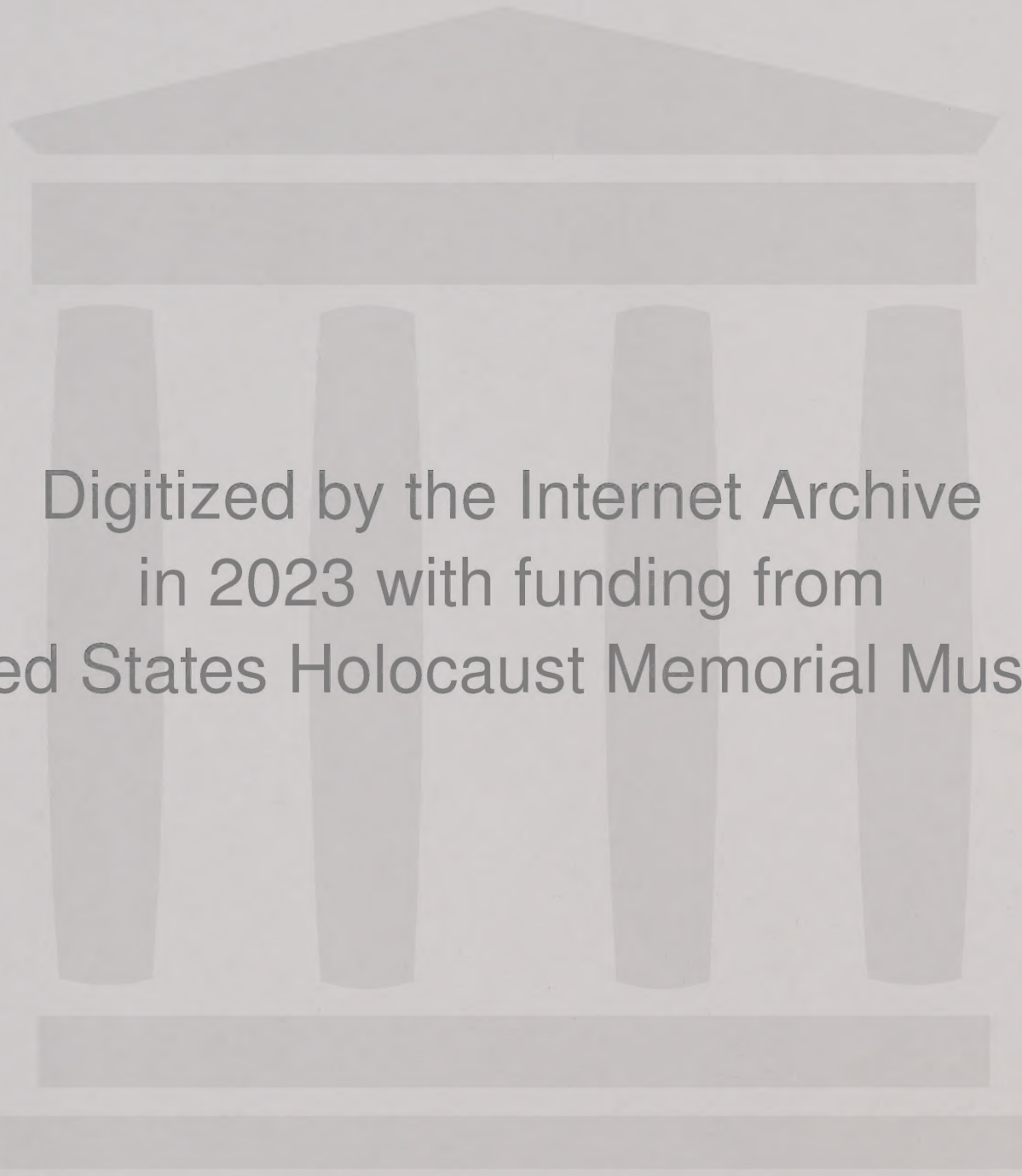


ועידת התביעות
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Against Germany

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THE LIFE OF EGON FORSHER

Taken from taped interviews.

These notes are taken, as close as possible, in his own words, separated into their respective tapes, but slightly re-arranged paragraphs, so as to sequence events into a better chronological order & to make easier understanding.

The word, "Daddy", refers to our father, Egon Forsher, in whose memory this is dedicated.

- from his ever-loving daughters, Jenny & Karen.

14-7-1992

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~~Additional tape: taped at Jenny's home. About 1988.~~

~~* Day in my life at Kaufering camp~~

~~-> Need to Remember~~

Markus Huppert
* 1866
+ 1939

*Maternal grandparents
of my father*

1. Ehe:
Gusti Silbiger +

2. Ehe:
Rosa Krakauer +

3. Ehe:
Hermine Windholz +

4. Ehe:
Henriette Boksborn +

Herman Boksborn
(Bruder von)

** my father's
my mother*

geb. 25.5.91
+ Juli 1941
Hermann

geb. 18.4.92
+ 14.6.1914
+ 6.4.1945
Josefine
Verheir.

3. Kind:
+
Oscar

4. Kind:
+
Helene

5. Kind:
+
Fred

6. Kind:
+
Erwin

7. Kind:
+
Irma

8. Kind:
+
Hugo

9. Kind:
Ottokar

geb. 26.3.1915
Polyn
+
Ernst / Arnost

geb. 9.11.1920
+
Egon Forsher

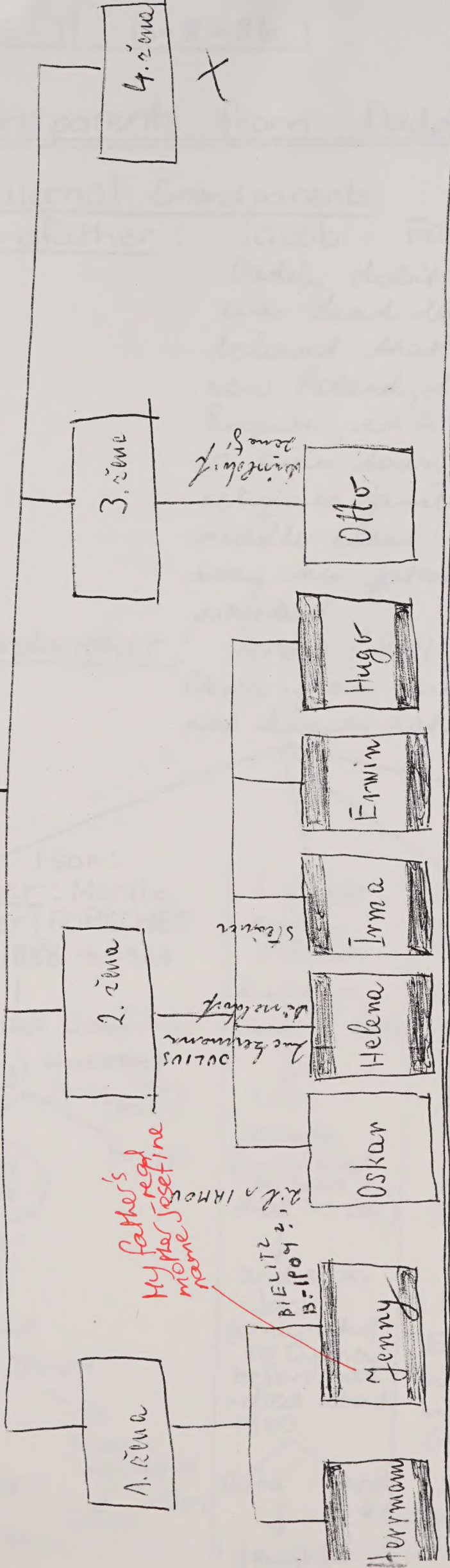
Elzemann
von +
Julius Zuckerman

Tochter
von
Rosa Klieger

Elisfrau
von
Frieda Huppert

** My father*

Markus Hupfert



Resi
+ TIPSI WITKOWICZ
= My father's grandparents (paternal)

Gabriel Forschen
+ IPOF WITKOWICZ

MAREK

Herrmann
+ WITKOWICZ

Adele
MAREK

USA 2.
DAUGHTER

Annie
MAYER

Moritz
B-1.8.88.
WYSZYNSKI

Berta
BORN

?

?

EDITH ADEK
KUNST
LONDON

KUNST

JACK MAYER
+ JOZEF MAYER
SUE

ERNEST
* EGN
JENNY
KAREN

EDITH

My father's father.

VIVIAN

Grandparents from Daddy.

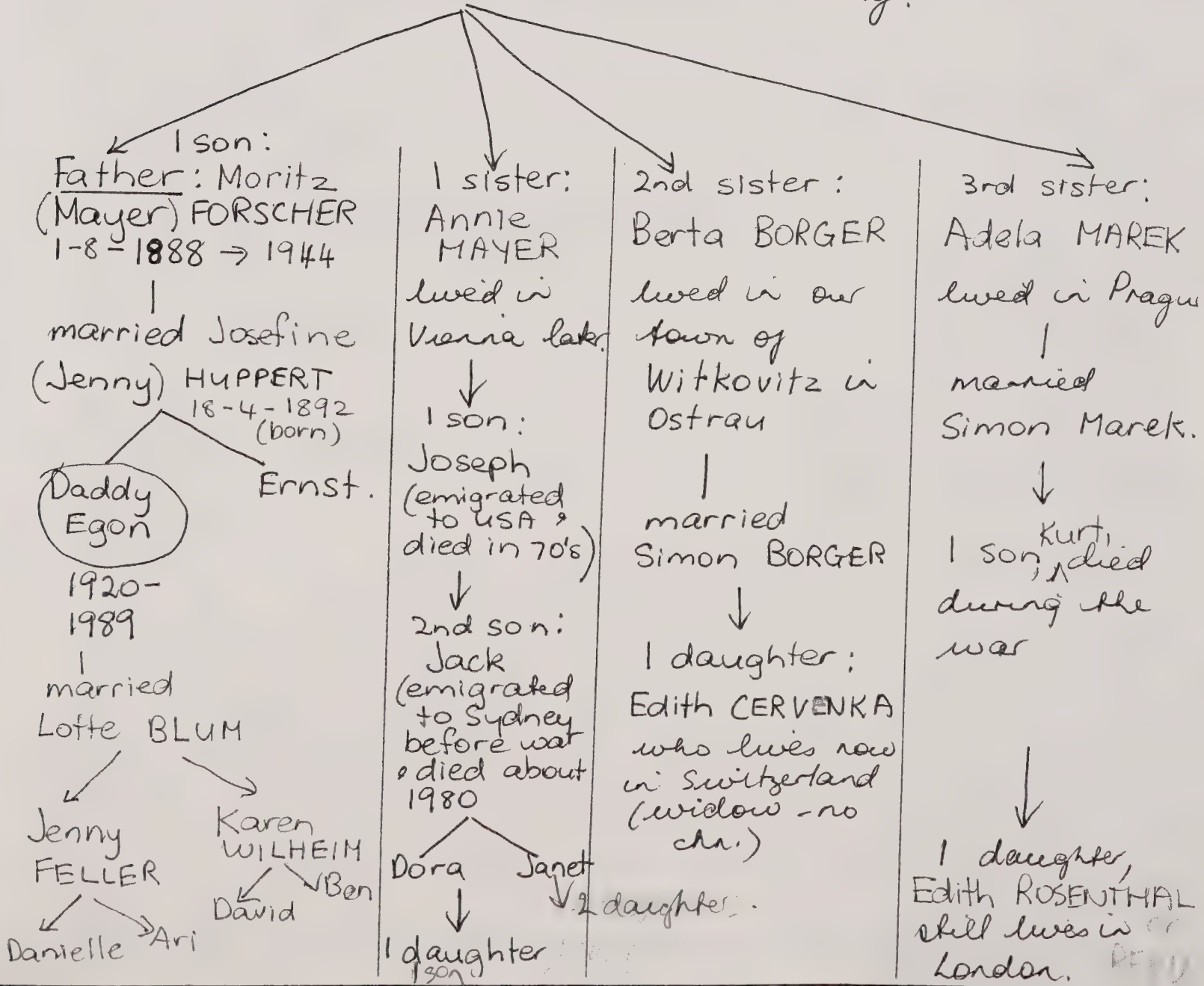
① Paternal. Grandparents

Grandfather: Jacob FORSCHER

Daddy didn't know grandfather since he was dead before he was born. But he believed that he ^{was born} lived in upper Silesia now Poland, then Austro-Hungarian Empire, in a town called, Bielsko-Biala (a twin town). He was born to a religious family (orthodox); poor to middle class background - shown by the way his father lived & the way he worked.

Grandmother: Teresa (Resi) HORNA.

Came from similar area to grandfather's, not known where exactly.



② Maternal Grandparents

Grandfather: Marcus HUPPERT (1866 - 1939)

Born in same region of Silesia. He was married 4 times, which was most unusual (maybe 2x married & widowed & 2x divorced - which was unheard of in those times. He had a number of chr.(7) scattered all over the world in USA & USSR. - could have been quite wealthy. - lived later in Breslau (Poland)

Grandmother: Gusti SILBIGER

1870
→ 1905

She must have been the first wife, because mother was the eldest of all those chr. Believed to have died young.

1 daughter
Mother: Josefina

(Jenny) HUPPERT
18-4-1892 (born) in Bielitz (Poland)
→ Oct. 1944?
married

Mayer FORSCHER

Daddy Egon

1920-
1989

married

LOTTE BLUM

Jenny
FELLER

Danielle

Karen
WILHEIM
David Ben

Ernst.

+

1 ½ brother of mother:
Herman HUPPERT
Lived for years in USSR
Political Commissar.

Doesn't recall any other chr.

2nd daughter:

Irma HUPPERT

married

Ernst STEINER.

Emigrated to USA
before war - died
childless in about
1983. He still lives.

(refer to photocopy of this family tree - supplied by Ernst Feller)

③ Parents from Daddy

Father : Mayer FORSCHER

Mother : Jenny HUPPERT → FORSCHER.

Marrried on 14th June, 1914 - in Bielsko (WWI began on 4th August 1914). Then shortly afterwards, must have come to Ostrau (now called Czechoslovakia) because eldest brother, Ernst was born there in 1915

Father had a retail shop, which he then expanded to 2-3 retail shops / Men's wear clothing, & started manufacturing of clothing. He was a businessman, not a tailor. This was in Witcowitz a twin town, then a suburb of Ostrau. This manufacturing business was a family concern; his brother worked there, with idea that daddy would, too, one day.

(Parents probably moved from Bielsko (Poland) to Ostrau (Czechoslovakia) to better their position & possibly because of persecution. Father didn't particularly like Polish people - he was a Polish citizen which meant that two sons would have to go into the Polish army. To avoid this, he moved to Ostrau to become a Czech citizen. Father went into the Austro-Hungarian army in 1914 & sons later into Czech army)

Degree of observance in Parents' home?

"As children, we went away from religiousness, as did our parents to some extent. We were always Kosher - separate dishes - extra dishes for Pesach - never used to travel on Saturdays, but as years went by, maybe through the children's activities, slowly observance was eroded. We went to school on Saturdays, & then the shop was open, even though he (father) didn't travel. But he closed shops on High Holy Days. Throughout the community, it was the same. The language in Synagogue was

Hebrew, & then as Republic was created in 1918, German was replaced by Czech. Naturally, parents never learnt Czech as well as chr. who went to school. Both brothers had a Barmitzvaah."

④ Education of Daddy.

Brother - went in 1921-22 to a German Primary School for 3 years. Ostrau was a 2-language town. Then he went to a Czech school because trying to achieve Czech citizenship. (There was freedom to go to German or Czech schools.)

Daddy - 5 years younger, born in 1920 - went straight to a Czech Primary School in 1926 where he spent about 5-6 years & then moved to a secondary Czech school (State) for 4 years. In 1935, finished High School. As a child, had school religious classes - (orthodox) - i.e. in Witcovitz. In every suburb was a synagogue. You belonged where you lived.

When left school at 15, was apprenticed to a shop (till 18 yrs of age) went part-time to a state business college or Academy, where he learnt book-keeping & business principles (No private schools in Czechoslovakia because of "Democracy" at time. The only exceptions were the Jewish "Gymnasiums" & some Catholic ones.)

After apprenticeship completed in 1938, stayed with same shop* The family's intention was to stay there for 1-2 years & then join parents' manufacturing shop where brother was already there. Name of ^{family} shop was "Forscher".

* Shop called "RIX" - Owned by Jews - it was like a large department store; salesman selling menswear.

⑤ Personal experiences with antisemitism during childhood?

"There was latent antisemitism during childhood—
inbred among people, even though never pogroms, etc.
As a child, I did encounter remarks e.g. by a
school teacher at about 14-15 yrs. of age: 'What
will you do when you leave school'. I answer:
'I'll work in my parents' shop'. Teacher says 'Of-
-course' (naturally assuming that this was to be
expected from a Jewish boy, to follow his
parents). Also, you grew up with the feeling
that you were different & not fully accepted.
But, no open hostility."

⑥ 1938+

"When family could see rise of anti-semitism,
there was at first, no talk of emigration, partly
because they didn't know where to go & partly
feeling of being trapped. General feeling of:
'It couldn't happen here, as in Austria because
of Democracy' = gave a false sense of security."

Then, with occupation of Czechoslovakia in 15
March 1939, more practical attempts to go to Palestine
were made, but never materialized (Only at
this time were illegal transports to Palestine.)
Then everything was dictated by Germans & Anti-
-Jewish laws were instituted.

The next day (16th Mar. 1939), daddy was
banned from entering his firm/job, by German/
Czech employees of "RIX" who simply took the
business off its Jewish owners. No protest was
possible because of the German soldiers.

July - Aug 1939 - Went to work for "Hachsharah"
Till Dec. 1941. This was groups of Jewish people,
employed on farming estates of Czech farmers,
paid, but funds went into organization/communit
of Hachsharah. Idea was Zionist. Worked in
fields in Southern Moravia in Summer & in winter,
went to agricultural school, with view of

going to Palestine. Learnt Ivrit, Jewish history, etc. The illegal transports to Palestine still went on for about a year because not world war yet. But family ties kept him from leaving.

Peter Lom (today in Sydney) together with me on Hachsharah.

Sept. 1939 - first transportations from Ostrau to Poland, in a town called NISCO, near Russian border. My father & brother went in that men's transport, but on that particular day, I was on Hachsharah. My father was about 50 yrs old. Nisco was a village, no barbed wire, ^{not a camp} etc. On 1st night, they were put up in a Synagogue & Polish population robbed, looted & used arms against them, the Jewish people. My father was shot in the leg & went to hospital in Nisco. The bone was shattered & the open wound never healed. Then, perhaps with the help of a nurse, in the middle of 1940, he took a train & returned to Prague, where my mother was living in a rented flat. There, my parents lived together & I visited them. (My mother had previously liquidated their Ostrau flat alone, selling all family belongings & giving some things for safe-keeping into non-Jewish hands, etc. So in Sept 1939 when my father was deported, she moved to Prague where close relatives, the Mank's (her husband's sister) lived. They were in contact with daddy, but she was worried about many visits from daddy because of the risk to him, since men had already been transported.

Daddy stayed with Hachsharah - safe - the farmers didn't care even though they knew that they were a Jewish group. (They were a completely self-contained group, doing it from their individual earnings: some did the cooking, others the laundering, etc.

My brother, stayed in Nisco for a while, whilst my father was in hospital. Because Nisco was close to the Russian border, after

a while, some people crossed the border into Russia. My brother, in an attempt to escape Hitler did that. He went to Lvov, where hundreds of these refugees lived. When he was asked to complete a questionnaire, among his answers he said that after the war, he would like to return to his old country. That sealed his fate & was then sent to Siberia - deep in Russia, where Germans never came. That saved his life.

After Siberia, we heard nothing else from him, but before we were in constant communication. But we heard that conditions in Siberia were supposed to be like a concentration camp i.e. he was treated like a prisoner - he lost his toes due to inadequate shoes in those freezing conditions.

By the way, my brother's name is Foltyn. He changed it because "Forscher" was still a German name & Czechs didn't like it.

The Czechs had a Government in exile in London, which was always accepted by the allies, & in due course, made arrangements with the Russians to free all original Czech prisoners from those camps, on condition that they join a special Czech army under Russian command. - (a legion.)

Daddy stayed with Hachsharah till about December 1941, till deportation.

An unrelated bit of information from this tape: "Beth Terezin", a kibbutz in Israel, today, has exact, complete cards/files on every person who ever went through Terezin, even for 1 night.

Hachsharah - lived close to Zionist ideals like a Kibbutz; preparing for Israel. We were in early 20's. Occasionally lived with parents for a few weeks/months - lasted till end of 1941.

Parents - lived entirely on savings from sale of business, flat, furniture, etc. - in rented flat in Prague. I also worked in Prague, doing heavy manual work, building a railway tunnel & my earnings went to help parents to live. Neither parent worked, as father walked, by now, on a stick & had angina & Jews could only do manual work at this time. (My mother had just paid board & lived with Marek's but now that my father came back, lived in a rented flat together.)

1941 - Things changed!

Since I was very close to the Hechalutz movement (similar to Maccabi or Haborin today), I became aware that my parents were refugees from Ostrau, where all Jewish records were burnt & so my parents were not part of the official Jewish community. They received no official Jewish communication. This was despite the fact that they were known as Jewish & wore the Star of David, etc. I jumped on the idea that if I registered & answered all questions, my parents won't be known. I conveniently forgot about my parents in all answers required. Thus, I kept them away from all regulations & official communications. I exploited this idea further, that when Terezin was completed in November 1941, I went voluntarily to Terezin for 2 reasons - a) to safeguard my parents & b) Zionist youth was only organized leadership at that time & they were promised to take over Terezin's agriculture, which would be much better than to be sent to the East e.g. Poland, if transportations were to take place.

So, on 17th December, 1941, I went on the 5th or 7th transport to Terezin.

Terezin

Terezin was a city which used to be a garrison city with barracks, moats, bridges & gates & high walls; a very easy city to guard - that's why chosen as only place in Czechoslovakia. Segregated by sex.

As soon as just agricultural work was available, we did it. A few months later, I was offered a job, looking after the SS domestic animals eg pigs, ducks, chickens, etc, in a garden, outside the ghetto walls. Meant that I lived outside, entitling me to move in & out of the ghetto. Immediately, I didn't know hunger (eg eggs from chickens & potatoes from pigs, etc) & able to live behind the guards so that I could be in touch with outside non-Jewish population. I could now send a letter & receive a parcel to & from my parents. This job I had till end of 1943 (about 2 years). Then, when more animals were received by SS, more people came to look after animals, so I was transferred to another part of this agricultural group & planted vegetables eg tomatoes - for Germans. Again, we could eat unlimited amounts of vegetables. I lived there in a small house, with no supervision from guards, for another year. Also, whilst here I was safe from further transports because the Germans ordered that we were needed on the land. In 1943, parents who till now were living completely unmolested & unknown to Council of Elders, were found out & put in a transport of only about 52 people & sent to Terezin. I knew & waited for them & could arrange for them to live together in a tiny room in Terezin (most unusual) & also I had sent to me, illegally, medications for my father's angina.

I got false papers, through a friendly doctor, stating that my father's shot leg was caused in WWI. Therefore, a kind of Austrian war hero, my father was saved from further transports to the East. Also, Dad through his work, could give them extra food, so parents didn't suffer from hunger.

Outside Czech Community - were not hostile - would help if not any direct danger. Helped Dad obtain false papers with non-Jewish identity for possible escape & together with fact that dad didn't look Jewish (light hair, etc). But closeness to parents didn't allow this.

Guards inside Terezin - Only about 6 S.S. + rest were Czech gendarmes, who were often friendly & helpful e.g. smuggling letters in & out, looked other way when eating, etc - but didn't help to escape. "Brother Sergeant" was common term if no S.S. man around.

The Ghetto Wache - was formed for keeping order. They were Jews used to help the Gendarmes (e.g. order in a queue or at gates, etc) Paul was in Ghetto Wache & one day when he was ordered to beat someone, he refused & was beaten himself & thrown out of Ghetto Wache.

Children in Terezin - Everything was always done for them e.g. schooling, better food rations, separate, better living quarters, etc - with idea that if everybody couldn't be saved, at least the chr. would try to be saved because that was future of our people. Thus, the "Department of Youth" was formed by Jewish organization. My wife, Lotte, worked for this department - teacher of sewing for girls. (I met her after the war in Bruno when she was widowed / no chr.)

Special transport of 1200-1300 Polish Children came in the midst of all this. We had to build special new, clean barracks for them ^{outside} ghetto. Specially good conditions e.g. bigger rations, better

clothing, educators, doctors, etc lived with them, kept dressed up, etc - with possible view of ~~extra~~ exchange with German prisoners of war. Kept for a few months & looked much better after a while.

Through these chr, those in authority there learnt about gassing elsewhere, since chr. refused to have showers to delouse, equating the showers with gas.

Then, probably exchange fell through, a train came & transported all these chr. + personnel to Auschwitz & straight to gas.

Parents - I saw them almost daily. I gave medicines to my father.

Terezin → Auschwitz - As Allies were approaching in 1944, it didn't suit Germans to have strong, able Jews left in case of revolt, so orders came on 28th Sept. 1944 for me to go on transport to Auschwitz - simply didn't go. About two days later, again didn't turn up to another transport. But when ordered to go onto 3rd transport, told that if ~~I~~ didn't go, both parents would go instead. This stopped any plans of rebellion. So, after doing everything possible to ensure that parents would never go, I went on my own free will. I could have escaped, since I had false papers with ^{own} photo, without the "J", but couldn't contemplate idea of sending parents to a fate that could have meant death. I couldn't have lived with the knowledge that if I acted otherwise & my parents died, which they did anyway; it would have been awful for the rest of my life. You hear, today in Seminars, about guilt - I know nothing about this, in fact, it made the rest of my life easier, knowing that during the war, I was always able to help my parents. I don't feel guilty about surviving the war - no guilt.

It was found, after the war, that the Germans used this family attachment deliberately to their own advantage in annihilating the Jewish people; one was never ready to sacrifice your dear ones. (If young people were alone, there would certainly have been more resistance.)

But, despite all my efforts, on 6th or 7th October, 1944, both my parents were sent to Auschwitz (only about 2 or 3 transports after me). They were on one transport - (I was told after the war by someone who was on their transport) - of about 1500 people & only about 15-200 were left. They were separated on ramp & sent straight to the gas chambers on same day of arrival. My mother was 52.

Lederer. In April, 1944 when I was still in the fields outside Teresin, a man approached in civilian clothes with no star & with an S.S. man standing nearby. He asked me to help him get inside the ghetto, that his name was Lederer & that he was in Teresin, transported to Auschwitz & escaped. His story should have told us much more about Auschwitz ^{Birkenau} than we knew. He spoke to about 12 of us in a cellar inside the ghetto & told us about Auschwitz - the gas, electric wires, dogs, ^{cemeteries} etc. (He was in a family camp in Birkenau.) But, he was totally disbelieved.

(To be continued on next tape)

Conclusion of Lederer story - By the end of the story, we didn't believe him. i.e. not totally, rather we thought that he was exaggerating. The claim of mass murder, crematorium, ~~and~~ gas, was hard to believe, while description of electric wire was believed. Also, another reason for this disbelief was that at this time, cards were arriving from Birkenau saying that people were alive & well. Possibly, the leadership didn't want to accept his story because of fear of panic within the camp. The fate of those transports was described vividly; also the "special Handling transports" to Auschwitz for 6 months - (Mum's) - for purpose of writing letters to outside & then being gassed. Together with him in Auschwitz - Birkenau camp, was my wife whom I met afterwards & who completely corroborated his escape details afterwards.

Lederer stayed about 2-4 weeks, went out & joined partisans & lived afterwards & wrote a book which is now available. He actually had documents written & took them to Switzerland, which described Auschwitz. He was an extraordinary man, who risked his life many times, not ^{interested} only to save his own skin, he left Terezn many times.

If our group would have believed him, it's possible that outcome would have been different e.g. some resistance to transportation. Maybe, Jewish leadership would have known the truth & suppressed it, only in order to suppress futile attempts at resistance, not as a collaboration with Germans. This was summer of 1944 with optimism of hope of end of war near.

Lederer was a friend of Paul Gottlieb (Lotte's 1st husband.) He took a letter from Paul to outside, which put Lotte & Paul at risk, but Lederer was not discovered.

Anyway, about $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$ year later, I arrived in Auschwitz in exactly same circumstance

I knew then, that he was telling the truth, but too late for myself.

Travel to Auschwitz

Dad in an ordinary train carriage, in normal seats, with luggage over heads & bigger pieces of luggage in another wagon. No food for journey. Some S.S. in carriage to guard us. This was on 1st October 1944 (lunch time) & arrived during day 2nd October in Auschwitz at a railway station. We knew that we were in Auschwitz. Carriages were emptied. Families were separated, small children went with mothers & men separated. Luggage emptied. Jewish prisoners who were doing this, didn't talk to us, with one exception a man who someone knew from Terezin, said to a friend "you're all young, healthy & willing to work - all workers & not businessmen - this is important for life or death". This was whispered all down the line. It meant more to older men, not to dad who was about 24 years old. After standing, without our luggage we were marched past the females to a group of S.S. men, with head Mengele. Had to state our age, health & occupation. He waved to right or left. I was with my best friend, Felix Lieber, who was with his father, a proud, well-known, Orthodox family, which I met in Terezin. When his father, a prominent professor from Prague, was waved to one side, his son didn't say a word & simply followed him. But was recalled by S.S. & asked for particulars, but allowed to go to his death alongside his father. This young man will always stay in my memory, as a heroic act. (He always excelled, even in Terezin, for helping others.)

From all the men who went through this selection, from about 1500 men & women, only about 129 men left.

(I had farewelled my parents - not a bitter farewell, because I was told that I would be going to city of Dresden to work & that separation wouldn't be for long. I believed that my parents would stay till end of war in Terezin.)

From railway station into Auschwitz/Birkenau ca.
After about 2 hours, we were led away & never saw or heard of others again. While walking along a road, flanked on both sides with camp we came to a women's camp. Seeing that we were newcomers, they begged for food to be thrown over the fence & some of us did it. About 10 S.S. were with us. At one stage, one S.S. man shot at women & one woman fell to the ground. I remember distinctly how we said, "Look how clever she is at feigning being shot." But we soon realized that she was really shot & dead.

Then, we entered our camp, called "The Gypsy Camp" where we stayed from 2nd Oct. → 7th Oct. (only 5 days). We had to hand over valuables, documents, etc. We were still ignorant of dangers eg we said "we can't take off the ring on our finger" to which the prompt answer "get it off straight away or we'll cut your finger off!" We were completely shaven (heads & bodies) & given a shower. Stood for hours at night, in cold, completely naked. In the morning, given underpants made out of tallit - (which was a deliberate humiliation & utter callousness) - poor trousers with no belt, wooden clogs & a jacket. No star of David, no striped clothes. Only one dark stripe painted on back of jacket. Then led to barracks (B II E). Still no food.

Then late afternoon, had first horrible soup which I couldn't eat. No work, only talked. Every day, another shower & change of clothing & new barracks for a few days.

No numbers on arms, no names recorded. We realized immediately that we were

meant to be sent outside to work.

After about 5-6 days - (that's the only time I spent in Auschwitz) - we were led out & sorted. Marched to the same platform in Birkenau, where we arrived before. When we saw high piles of luggage there, we knew that further transports had arrived from Terezin (still believed that parents were safe.)

We were loaded into closed cattle wagons & given a piece of bread - mostly some Czech Jew from some transport. Trip took 2 days & 3 night & arrived at night in a small place, called Kaufering in South Germany (It belonged to Auschwitz, i.e. manpower came & went back to Auschwitz, but in some administrative way, belonged to Dachau which is not far away.) Upon arrival at camp (about 2-3 kms from railway station), we saw some most run-down & emancipated prisoners, many without shoes, who were seen to be transported back to Auschwitz, to death.

After about 6 weeks, came another transport from Auschwitz ~~from~~ Terezin, who told of others being selected & some going to similar slave labour camps. One man then, told Dad about the fate of his parents: that about 2 transports after Dad's, parents were sent to Auschwitz, father didn't make selection & about mother, he didn't know, but in very clear words, told how parents didn't survive. (It was obvious after only a day or so in Auschwitz, that Hedene's words were true. Fellow prisoners were referred to as being "up the chimney", we smelt burning flesh, saw electrified wires, etc.)

Kaufering, was a small camp, with no barracks, virtually holes in ground, covered with tin roofs. We walked down a few steps & could walk straight. On both sides was a platform, with a piece of timber on top of soil,

where we slept, where someone else had before you. No place to eat, nobody ever undressed, no showers, only used water from snow. We kept the same clothes on, day & night, from Oct 1944 to end of war. Naturally full of lice. Up to about 1,000 people were inside these quickly built barracks. No numbers on arms.

We were woken about 5:00 AM & stood for hours outside & then put into working groups, manned by German Wehrmacht - no S.S., who spoke quite civilly & called us "protected prisoners".

My work consisted of felling trees outside in a forest & preparing underground for perhaps a future munitions factory. I was again, very lucky, because I also worked as an assistant to a crane driver, showing him with my hands, so I didn't work physically.

We had 3 "meals" per day: coffee, watered down soup & soup & bread. In evenings, we were counted & put back into barracks.

Others went to different places to work. Spent about 5-6 weeks there. Good because still stayed together with same group of people (from Mauthausen → Teresien → Auschwitz) & helped each other. Unheard of in these instances were examples, where some of us could do extra work in the kitchens at night for extra food, & would share it with some more needy of us. It existed. I remembered. Still showed us that we were still human beings.

Then, after about 5-6 weeks, we came back from work & were locked up in our "barrack" & then marched to another camp within the same region.

Still in Kaufering

I had little cards, which I still have now, given for good conduct or work. I had a number of these cards, which showed that we belonged to Dachau.

Another occasion, which showed the unusual comradeship, helpfulness & trust between us men - 1 man owed me a cigarette - (which I could have traded for bread etc) - for a favour I had done for him & when we were locked up, ready to be transported from Kaufering, he came to find me, risking his own life, just to give it to me. Most unusual to do that for someone you would probably never see again.

About 50-70 Wehrmacht soldiers were guarding Kaufering.

Then, during the night, we were transported to another camp, No 4. This was about Nov-Dec '44. Each of us got a blanket to keep warm whilst marching a few kms. (all around Landsburg).

Here there were timber barracks but we weren't allocated a place to sleep nor a place to work. Treated like working animals; we got up, put into working groups, marched in & out, given bit of food & then had to find a place to sleep (on both sides of barracks, there was 1 long bench on which we could sleep, one beside each other, with no dividers).

The treatment was harsher, the work was a harder kind of construction in forests. It was believed that each soldier could earn 2-3 days leave for a dead prisoner, so the German masters for whom we worked - i.e. the TODT organization - were the ultimate in brutality. We had to walk in deep snow without proper shoes & without additional clothes. Every day we had to carry the dead back to camp for counting & in that weakened state, it was nearly impossible to carry them through thick snow - 1 prisoner to

1 dead man.

We had no names, no numbers tattooed. Friendships lost due to lost contacts (different work groups) & this had a strong, negative, psychological impact. Many prisoners spoke Yiddish → couldn't converse with them.

Mostly, unfortunately, it was manned by Czech & originally Jewish compatriots i.e. (appos, Doctor, selection committee, etc - (one of us) - yet it was by far, the most brutal camp I've ever been to. They were already brutalized from Auschwitz & not forthcoming in any help at all.

We stayed in No 4, practically till liberation. The food was much the same as in Auschwitz. This camp was so bad, everybody recognised that you couldn't live long there. We slowly accepted our fate & counted how long we could live. The sadness was why should we die in such an unfriendly land, so far away in this winter in Bavaria? The end for us was expected.

Then some of us were "lucky". About Feb - Mar. 1945, typhus struck our camp. The ones who got typhus died, but those who didn't, weren't taken out to work because the camp was closed. Rations about the same or a bit less, but we could conserve our strength because of no work. Lasted a few weeks. (About $\frac{1}{4}$ - $\frac{1}{3}$ of population of about 1,000 people died from typhus.) I was very fortunate not to get typhus. Epidemic died as it came. We went back to work, only for a couple of weeks in about Mar - April 1945, but serious work was never restarted. The end of war must have been near. That saved the balance of us. If it wasn't for the typhus, probably most of us would have died. There was no medical help at all. A kind of hospital was there - no medications

- a place to lie down, with a doctor in charge, but couldn't do anything. (Same Dr. also performed selections - I saw it at least twice - he was probably under threat of death himself.)

We were completely integrated with strangers; none of our old friendships from before. Only 1 friend I had, who was liberated with me.

Between Terezin & Liberation (about 7 months not once could I cut my nails, never shaven, hair cut in Auschwitz but that was all - some primitive washing, without soap nor towels - no paper for personal use - no toilets, etc. - absolutely nothing. (Nail growth & hair growth slowed down & stopped - eg not full beards - just as women who stopped menstruating.)

This camp had a short-term life span. Able bodies simply worked to death. Only a matter of weeks, not months. One of worst fears in those months at end of '44 were the transports still coming from Auschwitz, which meant that those unable to work were taken back to Auschwitz, (which was only evacuated in about 18th Jan. 1945.)

(Side 2) -

About 21st April 1945 - we were all taken out of Camp No 4, evacuated, & marched away along the road in a long column. It was a very hostile country in Bavaria, Germany in winter, so we didn't consider our chances high in escaping from the column. We didn't realize that end of war was only days away; we were in such an emaciated way. Our march continued for about 4-7 days approx - don't remember any food, only a couple of frozen potatoes in fields along the way. Whilst walking, at rear & perhaps in the middle, prisoners were pulling some carts along with German possessions. When prisoners couldn't walk anymore, they fell back & simply ^{got} shot with a single shot from rifle.

from Wehrmacht soldiers, N.S.S.; only those unfit for battle eg elderly.

On the very first day, we were discovered by a lone American flier, who didn't attack, but stayed with us for the rest of the day. We felt more secure, hopeful & protected - that we had a friend. At night, we lost him. On other days, probably another plane, I don't remember.

When we walked through inhabited villages, never were we given help or crusts of bread. They didn't want to look at us, the young people in uniforms perhaps even insulted us. No contrition felt by German people at all.

At night, we slept on rail & in mornings we had to decide whether to continue or not. There was no question of giving up. We encouraged each other. We tried to begin at start of column, not at end, for that meant certain death. We were just a mass of shuffling bodies, not a march. Unable to go quicker because column was kms. long you didn't see beginning or end, unless you fell back to the end. It wasn't such a mass of people, but they couldn't keep us together, for some went quicker & some went slower.

Nobody had striped uniforms. We still had the same clothes since leaving Auschwitz in Oct. 1944 - no changes & only additions were if we took clothes ourselves from someone who died. We could wash clothes if we dared to, outside, in winter, when it would never dry. It was a complete animal treatment.

When the march ended that night, instead of a field, we came to a camp, called "Allach bei Dachau" (close to Dachau proper). Here we spent the night, with no food. The next morning, came the usual question - "Who can't walk, can stay back". On this morning, I decided, I can't anymore. My friend begged me, knowing what would

happen to me. I knew that I couldn't walk anymore & the vision of ending up in a ditch by the side of the road was too much for me. I just held onto the too promise of the Germans, that those who stayed back would be alright. - after all it was a camp & not a field. We had a tearful parting - my friend & I. I just knew from the last 1-2 days when I fell to the rear, that I couldn't keep up, so I decided to stay. The column marched on, & I stayed there with about 100 men. We laid there for about 1 hour, no food, ^(The Germans just left us there) but then the American army arrived. It was about the 28th April 1945 that we were liberated. We couldn't even get up & get excited about it. A few tanks arrived at perimeter of camp & Wehrmacht soldiers simply disappeared. We could barely acknowledge fact that liberation came. The Americans also went on & liberated the "column" about 1-2 hours later & my friend & others survived.

On the same day, we were taken into the camp barracks by the Americans & we stayed there under American command. We were confined to the camp, probably because of illnesses, etc. Some people even escaped & stole from neighbouring villages, but didn't hurt or kill local Germans, as they always swore they would. I don't remember having to go to the neighbouring villages. I didn't want to steal & take revenge nor face the civilian population without taking revenge. In the very first hours after liberation, there was some revenge from more able-bodied prisoners to the German guards. Without the Americans witnessing it, they caught up with some of them & hung them on cranes.

In the camp, the Americans gave us water & rich food, fatty foods which couldn't be digested properly by starving people. Also,

too plentiful. I ate it, we all ate it, we couldn't refuse it. Probably too much. Maybe, if medical knowledge was available, they could have put potatoes or rice into it, to slowly give starving people nourishment, instead of all those fatty foods to starving bodies. Dysentery followed & many died after liberation, partly because of food & partly because almost gone by that time anyway.

About that time, at end of April, we heard about Hitler's death. (after liberation)

Unfortunately, one day, one prisoner went through a hole in the wire he had cut, & perhaps a new American on duty, called him to stop. When he didn't, the American actually shot him. We were all filled with a shocking sense of helplessness that a life could be wasted then, by an American sentry. The sense of new-found freedom was so over-whelming after the SS & Wehrmacht guards, that nobody believed that Americans would actually shoot. Maybe my restrictions were due more to personal weakness than to anything else.

The Americans took charge & brought DDT powder to delouse us. Brought food & we had showers, could shave & given clothing - German uniforms. I had an SS uniform, without insignias, etc.

This camp, "Allach" was probably an annex of Dachau because Dachau was always mentioned. My papers which I ^{still} have from there, mention Dachau, not Allach.

To my knowledge we were shipped from Terezin to Auschwitz with names & number (I still have that number) but in Auschwitz & from then on, I never knew of any number & name used. Yet in Kaupferg, on those cards I had a different number, but not tattooed. On our clothing, we just had 1 black stripe painted on backs, maybe on front, so that

(7)

everyone knew & we couldn't escape.

Anyway, the Americans formed National Committees from where you came from & where you wanted to go. I went into the Czech group because I wanted to go back to Czechoslovakia. These were thus formed for registration & to make preparations to go home.

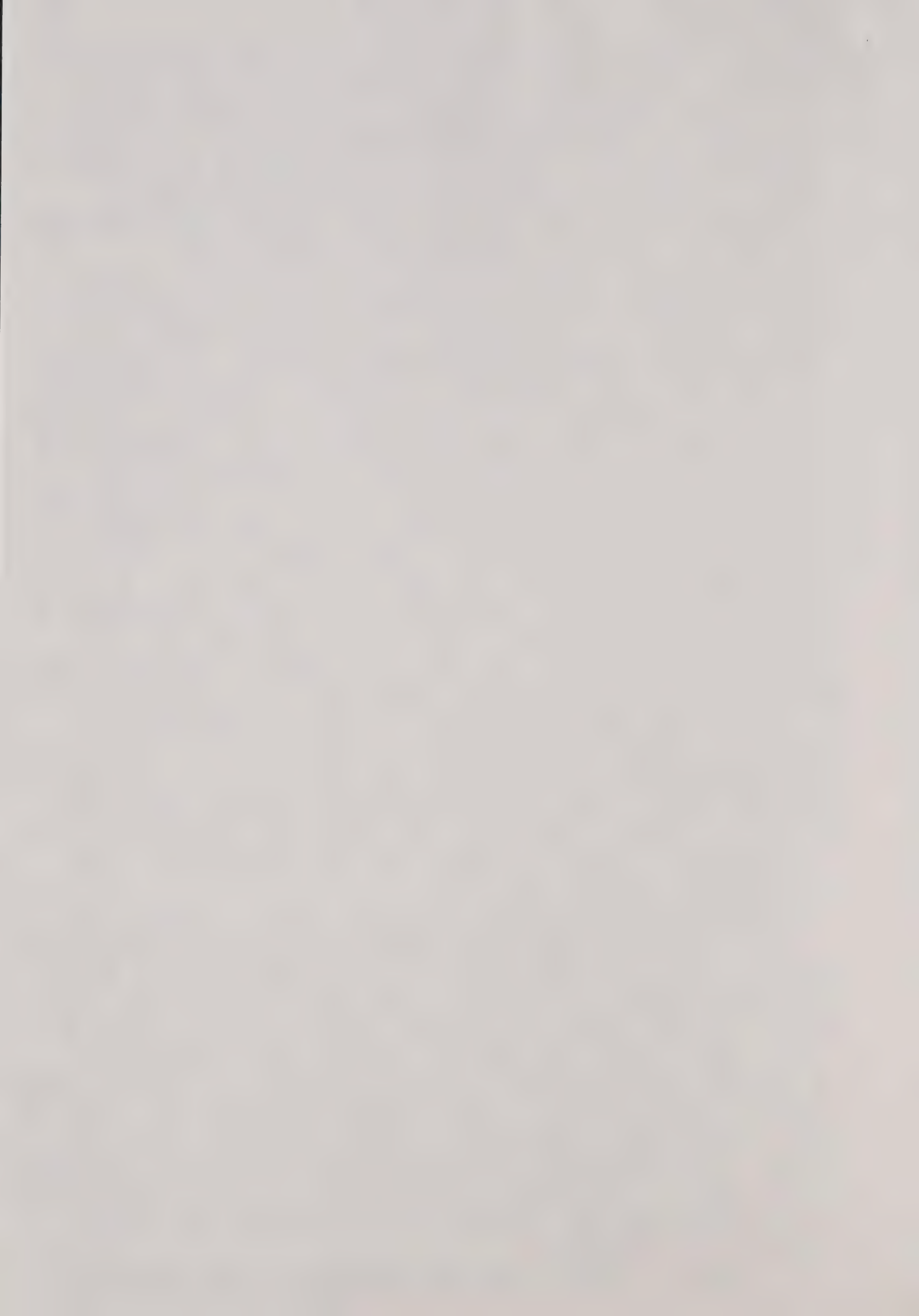
So after liberation, there was a period of getting stronger & then a period of organized repatriation to Czechoslovakia. On 21st May, I was sent back. By then, I had spent about 3-4 weeks there. So, when I was sent back, I was in pretty good condition. I didn't carry any health problems. I walked steadily, I was dressed, eating & talking.

March - April - no snow anymore, so if we had anything to drink anymore, it was only some running water, but absolutely no food. - we were just using up our last bit of energy we could - that's why so many of us couldn't make it.

Liberation by 8th Army under Patton (Americans). → period of regaining strength & waiting for Repatriation which Americans organised, country-by-country. Trucks assembled, put on them & brought to Czech border, near Pilsen. Put up by Czech Red Cross (about 100 men). I went next day back to Prague, "my home town". I was impatient to get back, even though I knew my parents had died - I was excited when I arrived early in the morning. Upon receiving a cup of coffee at the Red Cross station, they asked me - "Have you got somewhere to go?" Suddenly, a terrible emptiness settled, because I realised I didn't have a home - no parents to go to - no family. They sent me to a modern hostel, where I had my first bed with linen - stayed for 2 nights. I then, caught a train, back to Theresienstadt, in search of my parents, or at least confirmation that they weren't alive anymore. (I was still wearing an old SS uniform & for recognition that I was an ex-prisoner, all transport was free.)

So at end of May '1945, I arrived in Terezin where I found friends who confirmed my parents' transportation to Auschwitz, so I knew that they were dead, but it took years to recognize this. (eg when I left in 1949 for Australia, I still had doubts that maybe my mother could still return from the East & I would not be here. - I knew that my father was already a sick man & would not have survived.) Not, actually seeing someone die, took a long time to accept.

Then, I returned to Prague - not back to



hostel, but back to flat where my parents lived prior to their deportation - (still had hopes for parents.) Visited friends who still lived there - they didn't let me leave & asked me to stay. I arrived with the clothes on my back & with a small material bag which included, 1 spoon, extra pair of square material which we used instead of socks & a dish from which we ate. That's all I had with me.

I moved in with them - I've forgotten their name - "you see, one is not very thankful, is one?" Still in last days of May. Stayed for about a week - 10 days. Then, I heard on the Czech radio that someone was looking for me. It was my brother, who returned with a Czech branch of the Russian army under General Svoboda. He had lost all his toes on both feet. In 1945, he came to Prague with his Czech, Jewish wife - Trudy - no children - divorced 1949-50. Remarried to present wife, Kate - Jewish - still lives in Switzerland (When I emigrated in 1949, he had risen to a high Colonel in Czech army under Russians, where he stayed till 1968, when the Russians re-occupied Czechoslovakia. So ~~is~~ about 19 years after my emigration, he finally fled Czechoslovakia into Switzerland.)

So I stayed with these neighbours / friends, but I didn't want to prolong my stay unnecessarily because they weren't related & were very good to me. My parents had left with them, a wall clock, about $\frac{3}{4}$ metre high & inside was concealed some of my parents' jewellery. I don't think they knew. I knew because my father had told me. I divided these few belongings between my brother & I & took my half with us when we emigrated in '49. I also got back some other belongings from

some non-Jewish friends eg typewriter (which I still use today), a cutting machine from my parents business, but nothing of much value. No money.

The Czech state was very good to us ex-prisoners. I was then given a 2 bedroom, furnished flat from an ex-German who was expelled in first days after the war. I was given some vouchers to buy a suit, given tickets for food at a canteen (I could eat 10 times daily then + eating at neighbour's place & given pocket money weekly & also sent to Karlsbad - to a spa for a month, to recuperate.

While I had this flat, I looked for a job because I didn't want to live on charity. As a temporary measure, I found a job in an office of Shell, in Prague, where I stayed for a few months.

Later, I found another job in Blasko in Moravia, near Brno, as a manager of a big store. It included living quarters in a modern, centrally heated place, with a maid in the owner's place. This was like cream on an open wound. I remember on the first Sunday, she asked me, if she could run my bath - imagine! Unheard of; I felt like a king! Then, the spiritual healing was done. (I was introduced to this job by a friend from Haskava.)

On one of those visits from Blasko to Brno, I met my present wife, who was introduced through ex-Terezin friends (we seemed to stick together with ex-inmates because we were still partly in shock). In their flats, lived Lotte Gottlieb (widowed name) - maiden name Lotte Blum. This was in Nov-Dec 1945. I was then 25, she 24. She went back to Brno because of the hope that Paul (her husband,

would return there - last place they were all together.

Lotte's background -

She came from Vienna - Czech nationality - emigrated from Vienna to Czechoslovakia in 1938. She found it hard in Czechoslovakia because she couldn't speak Czech properly & German at this time was not welcome ^{+ after the war, as well.} She was often insulted because of German accent. She met Paul Gottlieb & married in 1941, only a few weeks prior to their deportation. Her parents lived together with her, she never lived together with husband. I suppose it was a normally planned marriage which would have taken place anyway, just brought forward. Departed about 2-3 weeks later in Nov-Dec. 1941, to Terezin, where they stayed till 1943 when they went together to Auschwitz. There they stayed in a family camp for purpose of writing letters. They stayed there for 6 months till June 1944 when Paul was then sent to Schwarzhilde. He lived through till end of war, but died on the day peace was proclaimed, on 9th May 1945.

Lotte was sent from Auschwitz to Homburg, to clear bomb sites & from there to Berger Belser, where she was liberated by the English Army. She then made her way back, alone, to Prague & then to Brno. It was perhaps Ernst Medgar who told her of her husband's death.

Her parents went from Brno to Terezin, but were transported earlier than her, in about 1942, to the East, somewhere in Latvia e.g. Riga. The closest she ever came to finding out about her parents' fate, was that father was in some kind of jail in Riga which was bombed by Germans → his death. Her mother appears to have been in one of the transports, where mainly women & children were simply shot in a ditch.

She was alone when we met. None of Paul's close relatives had survived (Parents & brother both perished). She also got a flat in Brno & sewed for people at home. Lotte was a trained dressmaker & designer, having been through dressmaking academy in Vienna). She bought herself a sewing machine & that's how she made her living.

So, at end of 1945, I met Lotte - spark was ignited. We were "very friendly" from the beginning. Unfortunately, in 1946, I had to go into the Czech National Military Service - (instead of in 1940, but I still had to go in. They made it easier because we were older, so shortened service to 6 months instead of 2 years). This was a very shocking blow to me. I really suffered eg again having to queue for food, receive orders, etc. During this service, we decided to marry. I left service on last day of Oct. 1946 & 9 days later, on my birthday on 9th November 1946 we married in Brno. It wasn't a Jewish wedding, but a state, civil wedding, with a few friends present, because no rabbi in Brno. We could have travelled to Prague, in a strange community, & embarked in a costly procedure to bring a rabbi to Brno.

I then went back to work for a short time in Blansko, but too much travelling. Then, at end of 1946, stopped this job & began own business together in Brno - manufacturing clothing in a small way. - Co. called "Julie Raskova"

Anti-semitism leading us to emigrate: -

I didn't like the general community in Brno. As a pre-war city, it was very German like because of many Germans there → bad feelings to us. A seed of anti-semitism was everywhere. A favourite expression is "They all got it with their mother's milk; a little more or a little less, but it was there!" I will never forget a "joke", a fellow-employee told me a couple of months after liberation, obviously not knowing

that I was Jewish - "what 3 ^{good} things did Hitler do for us Czechs?" Answer "a) Got rid of the war mongers b) Got rid of Germans c) Best thing was he got rid of the Jews". This was very painful for me to hear so soon after the war. So you see, how antisemitic they were or had become. But still less than Poles, where pogroms actually happened in '45 & '46.

Before the war, I grew up in Czechoslovakia, considered myself a Czech, but after the war, the gulf grew, partly because of Goebbels propaganda & also because "if you throw mud, it sticks" & also Czech's biggest accusation was that Jews promoted Germanism in culture, schools, language, etc. This was true, only to degree of our parents generation where we had German schools & therefore many didn't speak Czech properly. That was the depth of antisemitism. However, we still had better opportunities after war than elsewhere eg. my rehabilitation. But the effect of the war years, estranged us; It was hard to face people who didn't go through what we did - you couldn't help thinking "what did he do in the last 5 years?" It all made us aware that basically we're not Czechs, but Jewish foremost (opposite in pre-war times.) *at end.

My wife, too, was never happy in Czechoslovakia. (eg her difficulty with the language)

In February, 1948 (even though we were already attempting emigration (from 1947)) came the Communist Coup, where the communists took power in Czechoslovakia. Lotte was now more in favour of emigration. But where? Israel? No! Because in '48, immigration into Israel was difficult & also, after all our years of hardship, we didn't want to start at the bottom of the ladder again. Where else? Tried Canada, etc - no good. Also made application to Australia - this was fruitless because we didn't have a sponsor. We worked on this for a good 2 years.

There was an incident which my wife can't forget. At some South American embassy, perhaps Argentina - she was asked if she could prove her Aryan heritage. We were on a Czech quota of about 4-5 years wait for America.

After a while, my wife remembered that before the war, she belonged to a sport club, Hakoah which maintained some existence during & after the war in London. She wrote to them, if they could help get us into Australia. They passed this request on to ex-Vienia Hakoah members in Sydney. Here, a man, whom she didn't know before, Herbert Burd, took the application away from welfare & personally complied with some necessities e.g. to provide accommodation & also to prove that we wouldn't be a financial burden to the state. Then, our Australian Visa was finally granted at end of '48 - beginning of '49.

But then we had difficulties in getting out of Communist Czechoslovakia - we couldn't get an emigration passport. We succeeded in buying false papers - for a lot of money; from private people - where the Bolivian consul in Paris told us we had a Bolivian visa to stay with an aunt. So, the shipping Co. in Paris informed us that a ship was leaving Marseilles in mid '49. Then, on this strength, we got a legal emigration passport from Czechoslovakia, (ostensibly to Bolivia).
We left Czechoslovakia June - July 1949

Prior to our leaving Czechoslovakia, we received our Australian landing permits, but we didn't act on it because of our false papers which took us to Paris. Instead, we had our Australian permits sent to the Australian embassy in Paris to be picked up there. We didn't take any furniture because we knew that our travels would take a while & we weren't sure where we would ultimately land. We got our clothes legally

out; we had to apply for permission to take any personal item out with us e.g. a tie, pen, handkerchief, etc. & also the few personal belongings from parents.

So we went from Czechoslovakia to Vienna (1 month), on a train to Zurich (1 month) & on to Paris, where we would pick up our Australian permit. This was about Sept. '49. There, we went through X-rays, etc to go to Australia. We registered on a ship, called the "Surriento" a Flotta Laurus ship, boarded it in Genoa (Italy) & sailed for Australia.

The journey was quite primitive - we were separated into men's & women's dormitories. We arrived in Sydney about 9th December 1949.

*
(NB. Post-war - returning Jews were not very welcome because by that time, much of Jewish wealth, possessions, etc had passed over to non-Jews & the returning Jews, meant that these goods may have to be returned = another reason for their non-acceptance)

1st November 1949 - left Genoa (Italy)
26th " " - arrived in Fremantle (first
Australian port of call.)
9th December 1949 - arrived in Sydney.

Upon arriving in Sydney, Sybill Burd with her 3 sons, met us at the wharf. She wasn't very nice. She asked us if we had any money & when we said "yes", she took us to the Imperial Hotel at Kings Cross where she booked a room. Our communication wasn't easy. Helped us in first few days & also tried to find us accommodation after hotel. She invited us to her home in Pymble. They were very welcoming & did more for us than we ever expected (we expected nothing - only help by getting us permits) for we had nobody here. In later years, I asked Herbert Burd if he had had to pay any money to sponsor us coming & upon hearing "yes" I repaid him the small amount. We stayed on good terms with them over the years - we were invited to their 3 sons barmitzvahs - they came to our weddings, but that's where our relationship ended.

I found myself a job, with Osti (Theema owned it) in Harris St. Ultimo, from about Jan. - Febr 1950, where I stayed for 3 years till 1953. I started without English, as a cutter of ladies underwear & soon worked myself up to be in charge of cutting department.

My wife, was luckier than me. She was trained at the "Dressmaker's Academy of Vienna" where she completed the full course. So, she was a dressmaker, designer & pattern-maker & found herself a job already in Dec. 1949 at "Jeanette" in Summer Hill (also in ladies underwear.) We both could have worked there, but it was against my liking to work all day together in a job.

We lived in 1 rented room for $1\frac{1}{2}$ years - at Kings Cross - a kind of boarding house. We shared a bathroom with others & had a small electric top on which my wife cooked for us.

This was from Dec '49 - mid '51. Then it was urgent for us to find a bigger place because my wife was pregnant. Our first child, a daughter, Jerry, was born on 28th Sept. 1951. So she's now just 35 - married to Felber. Full name, "Jerry Ann Forster", after my deceased mother, but she doesn't use the "Ann".

My wife worked throughout the pregnancy. She had a few jobs, bettering herself, as a designer of outer-wear in better places. Even after Jerry's birth, she continued as a freelance designer from home for various firms for many years.

We found ourselves a flat - 2 bedrooms in New South Head Rd. Edgecliff, ^{in 1951} where we stayed for 27 years. Initially, we had to pay a few hundred pounds ("key money"), after furnishing the flat, we were almost broke, as before. On 7th January, 1958, our second daughter, Karen Susan Forster was born. We brought up our 2 daughters there.

We had nobody in Sydney. However, after about a year, I discovered that a first cousin of mine was living in Sydney since pre-war - Jack Mayer. - (My father's sister was his mother.) He had a wife & 2 daughters, Dora (now Velar) & Jeanette. We saw each other from time to time, but a close relationship never developed. On our side, probably because there was not much room for social activities, since I often worked till about 7:00 PM & then went to evening classes to learn English - they were already established in a house in Bondi.

So, in the 27 years we lived in our flat, we never tried to buy a house - for a

number of possible reasons :-

- 1) Maybe because of not having necessary deposit, due to the amount of money we made
- 2) Maybe because of not wanting to buy in a place which wasn't good enough because of what ^{we} they could afford
- 3) Maybe because of indecision + another reason
- 4) We were "protected tenants". Because the flat belonged to an overseas Company who didn't care very much, we paid a very low rental for all those years (at first, it was about \$5 - \$6 per week, reaching about \$30 per week in 1978).

So looking at it, in retrospect, now it seems different. It would have been better buying our own place then, but never did!

After working for Osti till 1953, I then worked for 1 year for Emery Strasser at Emstra, as a cutter. Then in 1954, I left & started together with my wife, in a small way manufacturing ladies wear. It was a "Makeup" business i.e. making up for other businesses, frocks, skirts, etc. After renting a place for six months in Double Bay, we then moved to Salisbury Rd. Comperdown, where we paid rent for many years. Company, called "Metro Models" (I could have bought this small factory at the back of a shop, all those years ago, for only a few thousand dollars, but didn't! I was never one of those smarties!)

The original idea was making up for others & eventually making up our own & selling it, but never came to it ^{since} in 1958, when my second daughter was born, there was again an interruption. I employed at the peak, about 30 people, then decreased & then worked half a day in 1980 & in mid-'81, we retired. This was because "making-up" was becoming harder & more competitive &

harder to get qualified labour, so when I turned 60 yrs. old, I gave it up.

However, I used to work very hard; about 16 hrs. per day, about 6-6½ days per week. If I would have my time again, I probably wouldn't have done it. I never had time for anything, frankly, not even for my family.

In 1978, we moved out of our flat & bought our current unit in Millbury Rd. Dover Heights. This was because the final straw came when the International Co. who owned the flats, wanted to sell flats & discovered that we were still "protected tenants" paying about \$30 a week, while others paying about \$100 week. So, when we had to pay full market value we started to seriously look for something else.

German Compensation - We're comfortable in our retirement, even though not on an ^{australian} pension. But we are receiving 2 kinds of German compensation:

- 1) For health loss - minimum, monthly pension - couldn't live off it.

- 2) Superannuation pension. Czechoslovakia doesn't pay this superannuation pension, but the West German Govt. has to pay this, because the protector of Bohemia & Moravia at this time, was Heidrick, who confiscated this superannuation fund, worth millions of dollars & took it to Germany.

(NB - All 4 of these pensions for both of us are minimum e.g. one of my wife's is about \$60 per month - but more than \$200 per mth. for both of us; nice addition to our income. They are not taxed anymore because not normal payments - only because of war experiences. That's the state of law here.)

Side 2.

Overseas trip-1979 - first & only time overseas. We were still in business, but it was practically wound-down, so we closed it for 8 weeks, mainly to see my brother, whom I hadn't seen for 30 years. We went to Switzerland, Austria & Israel, not back to Czechoslovakia. Sometimes, I would like to go back for a couple of days to see my home-town, my school, the street where my parents lived, etc, but all reports from people who did that, are all very "grey". eg. dirty, dark, unrepaired streets, all empty streets which were once full of Jewish shops. There was a loss of all "our" people, no one we knew still lives there, so there's no point. Also, my wife is nervous of it because of the fact that my brother was a serving officer in Army & left. They put him on trial in absentia & he got 10 years of hard labour. In that regime, you never know what repressions they can bring, even to relatives of those people. So we didn't go back there, because not worth it, if it would cause nervous strain on my wife. (Our name is a typical, German-Jewish name, not a very common name.)

If we were to again travel to Europe, I would definitely like to visit Dachau which is not far from Switzerland, where I would go again. Somehow, I don't know if it's not crazy, I wouldn't mind going back to Auschwitz. I know it's far, but my parents perished there - to say "Kaddish" at the place. It would be for sentimental reasons.

Attitudes to Germany & Germans - We flew straight to Switzerland, where my brother had a full 3 weeks programme planned. Among these travel plans, he planned that on one day, we would go to a German town. But, we changed this, for we both would

have felt nervous - we both still feel a lot of hostility. Maybe, this feeling is a "luxury" because we live so far away from Europe i.e. because we don't have to mix with them, we can avoid it here. Perhaps, if you live closer, like my brother, it may be easier to come to peace with feelings towards Germans. I prefer keeping them where I've put them so many years ago. This is because:-

- 1) Being born & brought up in Czechoslovakia, for us, the Germans were the conquerors of our homeland, even if you disregard us being Jewish.
- 2) For some of my Jewish, German friends, the Germans are still their school friends, neighbours, but for us, not. Instead, they were the conquerors, the jackboot, the men who came & ruined our lives - in brown & black uniforms; they did it all!
- 3) For me, there's no such thing as a Nazi; he was a German & that's all there was to it. I don't want to go to the bother of finding a nice German - there weren't many - I don't want to distinguish.

In Australia, if I came across a German in business, if I could, I would avoid it. But if not, I would never converse with them in German, but stay on English terms i.e. to talk to him as if he wasn't German - I would never discuss the past with him. Maybe, it's a "head-in-the-sand" approach - I don't know! I don't want anything to do with them.

However, at first I spoke to my elder child, only in German & not in Czech. Why? If we couldn't speak to her properly in English, we chose German for 2 reasons:-

- 1) My wife's Czech was never so easy & perfect
- 2) We thought that if a second language would be taught to our child, German - better than Czech, which was not an international language at all - only to converse

I did it, however, with a good deal of misgiving because of my feelings of anything German or linked with Germany.

I also feel the same hostility towards German composers.

I don't like to read German & not even interested. Also, I wouldn't find it easy, because haven't for so long. (Also, I wouldn't read Czech. I would watch a German programme on SBS television, in privacy of home, however, but wouldn't like to go to movies, perhaps because I don't know who would sit next to me.

My wife feels similar to me, w/ her dislike of anything German, even if her mother-tongue was German.

However, somehow the older we get, we unconsciously revert back to speaking German. Between us, we speak German, even to my dislike. I will never go back to Germany. I don't want to see their uniforms, don't want to answer the innocent young German man at the border, his normal questions. Why be nervous about it? I had enough of it then. That's how I feel.

If I wanted to purchase a product? Years ago, it was very straightforward - w/ wouldn't want to help the German economy, by buying even a German pencil. But through the years, this has relaxed. Now, I don't look where it was made. But there is a line! I would probably overlook where an alarm clock was made, but I would never drive a German car, because size-wise, it really helps the German economy. A "Mercedes".

was driven by the German Military & "Volkswagen" was Hitler's dream - his brainchild - the "People's Car" & also "BMW" - I would never own a German car. I drive a Japanese Mazda - I don't feel like this about the Japanese, even though they were allies, because they didn't touch us. Our own experiences, shape our views of the world. I don't think, I would even travel through a German airport on the way somewhere.

To some people, this probably doesn't sound rational. I do, accept their money, reparations because:-

- 1) They plundered Europe & acquired billions of dollars
- 2) Their payments cannot in any way, compensate for what they did to us, so I suppose we accept this kind of restitution.

I was very pleasantly touched when both my daughters, with their respective husbands, on separate occasions visited Europe, both avoided Germany, knowing my feelings. I didn't tell them not to, because they are adults. Both visited Dachau, on a day trip from Austria & both left Germany on the same day because they found the town of Dachau repulsive. One of my daughters, wrote to me saying that she couldn't think of staying overnight, in a place where her father was imprisoned. It filled me with a great deal of satisfaction, that both my children felt this way.

Why treat Austria as innocent country? The language & people are same. Many people say that Austrians were bigger Nazis than Germans eg Hitler & Goebbels were both Austrians. However, we went to Austria for sentimental reasons because my wife was born there & also, because her

"Frauline", the woman who helped bring her up was terminally ill in hospital there. She was the governess of the Blum's. When I first met her in 1949, when we travelled through Vienna, I was very cool to her, because for me, she was an ordinary German or Austrian - part of the system. When I met her next, 30 years later, I had accepted the situation & together with the fact that she was good to my wife & she was terminally ill. My wife meant a lot to her & they had great conversations, mainly based on exchanging memories of the past.

Many of these things are not exactly rational & I hide behind knowledge that it isn't rational & not wanting to do anything with it. If I meet, tomorrow, a German, non-Jewish tourist, I prefer not to talk to him. If I had to, I would never talk about the past; I would always wonder, what did he do in past 30-40 years or what did parents do? Couldn't be bothered to find out - don't want to come close to it, or to think about it.

In our generation - i.e. those who went through those 5 or 6 years - our thinking & living, is shaped by those years - our political & humanitarian thinking, etc. eg for the rest of my life, if I meet a German on the street I would just think if he is a German or a Jewish German & if the first one, then I don't want to have anything to do with him.

Feelings towards Israel.

We toured Israel for 4 weeks.

From a child, I was always inclined to Palestine & Israel because of Maccabi membership. The war years showed me that "our" people are "our" people; sense of belonging i.e. nobody can be as close to me as my people, the Jewish people.

Only one disappointment when I arrived in Israel: I had the Israel of my Zionist dreams, in front of me, & I couldn't accept it. In the meantime, things had changed - many Oriental Jews had come & Israel was no longer, the land of our European leaders. eg. mannerisms of people (more rude & abrupt), non-clearness of streets & cities, etc struck me. I realized this was my fault, rather than Israel's.

However, Israel fulfilled all our expectations otherwise. Naturally, I felt at home - I felt a real kinship, for once I was in a country where I didn't have to encounter antisemitism. No relatives in Israel, from either of us.

Visit to Kibbutz Givat Chaim & Archives of Beth Theresienstadt - every person who ever went to Terezin, is recorded there - we found ourselves, our parents, etc. In charge of all this was Miriam Cerverka who was with me in '39 on Hashavah. She & her husband took a day off work, to show us the kibbutz. This day was marvellous - it was the highlight of our Israeli stay.

Not a real regret that we didn't make aliya for ourselves, but often thought - "did I do the right thing for the future of our children?" Many times, I think, that Israel is the ultimate goal of our people, so if we already dislodged ourselves from one country, wouldn't it have been easier to go straight to Israel, rather than to create a family in Australia, & either in our children's generation or their children's generation, be faced with the prospect of emigration or aliya? But you must always live with decisions at times & must always believe that if you give enough thought & discussion with your partner, then we can't have regrets.

Now, it's different, because we have 2 married daughters here & 2 grandchildren - (our younger daughter only married less than 2 years ago).

I only hope that one day, we or our children, won't regret it. But that's life - that's how it is!

Attitudes to Australian Jewish Institutions:-

We have a Blue box & we support Israel through the U.I.A., but don't support JCA. This is because, when we arrived, so many years ago, we didn't find the Jewish population of Sydney very supportive or helpful. We didn't go to Jewish welfare ourselves, but know of many who went & didn't get help. I know that pre-war population of Sydney were very self-orientated & generally not supportive of us European people. Australian Jewry did not have the best record towards possible immigration of our people in '38-'39 years. I had the feeling, that was greatly accepted, that pre-war Jewish population would have been happier if we didn't come. We shattered their security. They seemed worried that general population would put "them" together with "us". We also felt restrictive help only by most Jewish organisations. Not all doors were open. I feel that many of our people who came then, feel the same way. However, some who made it very well here, who came then, are now the biggest supporters of JCA. To give you an example: we know of many people who were exploited in '49-'51 years by our own people - we were paid under award wages. I had this experience myself, for about $\frac{1}{2}$ year until I had enough courage to ask for what was due to me → they gave it. Some immigrants, were renting rooms for exorbitant rates. Therefore, our welcome by Australian Jewish people was not the best!

This is reflected, in many cases, by the return feelings in later years.

Both my children went to Non-Jewish Kindys & then to public schools. I know that the Welfare organisation is only a small part of JCA & that JCA also covers Jewish schools, old-age homes, workshops, etc. I also know, what my brain tells me, that those old experiences should be put aside.

Attitude to Jewish organisations - continued.

Somehow, I prefer to give every spare dollar to Israel. No real, rational reason, not to help JCA - perhaps, if I could spare more money, I would divide it between UIA & JCA. I've never worked for UIA nor JCA nor JNF collect

However, since retirement 5 years ago, I am very involved with 1 organisation - "The Australian Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors". I've already been on the committee for 2 years & at the moment, I'm treasurer. I never want to be president, but would like to do whatever on the association. (I was the Chairman of the membership Committee) I spend about 1-1½ full days per week on the Association work - this is my "pet child". My next step would probably be the Israel Appeal.

I'm not a member of a Synagogue. Our most natural choice would be Temple Emanuel. This would be about our depth of Jewishness. This could be partly due to a lack of real religious feeling; many, who survived the camps became sceptical because G-d didn't penetrate the electric wires & also because of the thousands of children who perished. I don't belong to either polar point, but my religious hunger isn't very great. However, my parents were orthodox & members of a synagogue - kept Shabbat - were Kosher - didn't travel on Saturday.

Now, we keep Friday nights, we say Kiddush, but mostly because of our children & their children. We started when our children were little - when we were alone, we didn't.

In the first few years, we used to go to the Maccabean Hall for High Holydays & in the later years, my elder daughter & her husband became members of the Temple & we participate there every year, at least for the Kaddish. Then, we use their seats because

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naturally they're not there for the prayer for the Dead - for Yizkor.

Since our children went to Temple Emanuel for Sunday school & they participated in the Yom Kippur Children's services, we went there, but never became members - because of economy, etc. Today, maybe it's different, but spiritually & religiously, I don't feel the need. We do participate on Erev Pesach at home - in the framework of the family, because our elder grandchild is now at the Emanuel School. We also had seders at home when my own children were growing up - I conducted them as best as I could from the Hagadah. We didn't celebrate Chanukah. We ate non-Kosher foods. We do eat pork, though my wife doesn't buy it much because of its fat content.

My wife is a member of one of the Wizo groups. However, I'm not a member of B'nai B'rith, nor of any other Jewish organization.

I'm retired since 1981, during which time I've had a major illness - to all medical extent I'm recovered, even though I still have tests every 3 months. I had colon & liver cancer, had 2 operations. I feel I will take on more things in the future.

My brother, who is still in Switzerland, never thought of coming to join me here, because he easily found his "roots" there - finding a job in the bank (which he held for about 12-13 years), he could speak the language there & he would have found it very difficult at that age to come here without any English. I also have a female cousin there, with whom I grew up in Austria - she's the daughter of the sister of my father "Berger", but married → Edith Cevanka.

Both my daughters, married Jewish men, very much to our pleasure. The first one, married Ralph Feller, our second daughter, married

Danny Wilhelm, with a Hungarian/Slovakian background. (Danny's parents are also post-war survivors. They left Czechoslovakia about the same time as us, but went to Israel for 4-5 years, where Danny was born & only later, came here.)

I think the little bit of Jewishness which was instilled into my daughters, was more due to our misfortune, to our experiences, suffering, than to religion itself.

(The only other thing I wanted to tell you, was that when I was telling you about my last camp, from where I was liberated - "Allah bei Dachau" - I wasn't completely sure whether it was Dachau proper, but it was a satellite concentration camp, about 5 miles away from the main camp. There was a much larger Jewish population there, than in Dachau proper, because Dachau was the first German Concentration Camp, opened about 1933 & all concentration camp commanders were trained there.)

